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Louisiana Four-Year Campuses Kick Off Student Retention Project

BATON ROUGE - Louisiana's four-year universities launched the student retention phase of the Board of Regents statewide enrollment management project today with a workshop in Baton Rouge. The enrollment management project is a key component of the state's Master Plan for Public Postsecondary Education, a strategic plan for the advancement of all public colleges and universities statewide. Retention strategies are a vital part of the state's enrollment management effort. They are intended to keep students in school and successfully pursuing their educational goals.

At today's workshop, Noel-Levitz representatives provided university participants with a detailed overview of the retention phase of the overall enrollment management project, which will help the institutions provide a college experience that fosters student success and, ultimately, graduation, after enrollment. Participants received instruction in developing key retention strategies and collecting data to support retention planning. In addition, each campus group met with their individual Noel-Levitz retention experts, who will serve as their specific campus representatives during the one-year course of the project. Each campus will have six on-site visits by its assigned representative to guide in the development of goals, strategies, action plans, deadlines, budgets, and assessment procedures, and to facilitate implementation and review progress.

"There's been a lot of positive change in Louisiana higher education in recent years. The enrollment management project is another step in the right direction," said Commissioner of Higher

Education Joe Savoie, who was on hand to welcome the workshop participants. “The goal of the Master Plan, of course, is ‘access for success.’ That means focusing not only on attracting and enrolling students, but also on providing an environment that will encourage students to successfully complete their studies. This is an important part of our accountability efforts. Retention is also critical to the success of our institutions and to achieving an improved social and economic future for our state.”

As new admissions requirements for public four-year universities are fully implemented by the fall of 2005, enrollment dynamics at all of Louisiana’s public higher education institutions, both four-year and two-year, will be impacted. In addition, Louisiana is projected to experience a significant decline in high school graduates by 2012. The Regents enrollment management project, facilitated by Noel-Levitz, the nation’s largest college enrollment management firm, is aimed at helping Louisiana’s postsecondary institutions develop campus-specific marketing, recruitment and retention strategies and plans to adapt to these changes.

An objective of the state’s Master Plan For Public Postsecondary Education is to “increase the percentage of first-time, full-time entering freshmen retained to the second year in community colleges and universities by 5 percentage points by 2005.” The state has seen some improvement in this area in recent years, but there is still a significant gap to address. The current retention rate is 74.1%. The 2005 state goal is 77%.

In May, the 14 four-year institutions began the initial phase of the enrollment management project, which focuses on marketing and student recruitment. The state’s two-year campuses kicked off their marketing and recruitment project last week. The retention phase begun today is scheduled to be completed next year.

Louisiana’s four-year university campuses include Grambling State University, LSU - Alexandria, LSU A&M (Baton Rouge), LSU - Shreveport, Louisiana Tech University (Ruston), McNeese State University (Lake Charles), Nicholls State University (Thibodaux), Northwestern State University (Natchitoches), Southeastern Louisiana University (Hammond), Southern University and A&M College (Baton Rouge), Southern University - New Orleans, University of Louisiana at Monroe, University of Louisiana Lafayette, and University of New Orleans.